Listing of Claims

1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user with a tailored sequence of questions, comprising the steps of:

5   presenting a segment of the sequence of questions to said user, the user answers to said segment being pertinent in determining an affinity of said user to at least one affinity group, wherein said affinity group comprises a plurality of profiles;

creating a profile for said user or adding to the profile for said user based 10 on said user's answers to said segment, wherein said profile is comprised of said sequence of questions and corresponding answers;

performing at least one of associating said user profile to at least one affinity group, and creating at least one new affinity group and associating said user profile with said new affinity group;

15   causing a subsequent segment of said sequence of questions to be presented to said user, the selection of said subsequent segment to be influenced by at least one of an answer received to a previously presented question in said sequence of questions and an affinity group to which said user profile is correlated by said method;

20   ~~optionally~~ repeating the steps above until all possible questions of said sequence of questions have been presented to and answered by said user; and,

storing said user profile;

the questions being pertinent to at least one of compensation, benefits, wages, and economic analysis.

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2. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said ~~a~~ segment of a sequence of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group that forms a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

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3. (cancelled)

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4. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least subsequent segment of said sequence of questions is presented because of at least one of:

popularity of said subsequent segment within said affinity group;

5   as a most frequently answered subsequent segment within said affinity group;

as a most recently answered subsequent segment within said affinity group; and

with regard to a defined relation to ~~said~~ at least a segment <u>that was</u>
10   <u>presented prior to said subsequent segment</u>.

5. (previously presented) () The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one question is capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

15   6. (previously presented) The method of Claim 5, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer value for said question.

7. (previously presented) () The method of Claim 6, wherein said new answer is used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said
20   question is subsequently posed to a second user.

8. (previously presented) () The method of Claim 1, wherein a question comprises at least two possible answers.

25   9. (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.

10. (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:
30   popularity of an answer within said affinity group;

as a defined relation to said at least one question;

as a most frequent answer within said affinity group; and

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as a most recent answer within said affinity group.

11. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

5   filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

12. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:

10   real-time; and

      batch mode.

13. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:

15   modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:

            predetermined criterion;

            at least one filtering rule;

            consistency with previously answered questions;

20   consistency with all answered questions; and

            consistency with answers of said affinity group.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein said modification comprises at least one of omission of said answer, and tagging said user profile

25 as inactive.

15. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

      periodically creating a new affinity group; and

      associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

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16. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

      a user creating a new affinity group.

17. (original) The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of:

associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

5   18. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

providing a report.

19. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein generation of said report is constrained by at least one of:

10   an attribute of said user profile; and

a reporting goal.

20. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:

15   a profile attribute value;

a range of profile attribute values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;

a date range;

20   a minimum count of matching profiles;

a maximum count of matching profiles;

a question filter;

an affinity filter; and

a match score threshold.

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21. (original) The method of Claim 19, further comprising the step of:

weighting said constraints to provide a match score.

22. (previously presented) The method of Claim 19, said step of providing said

30   report comprising the steps of:

matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of an affinity group and a user profile, and

generating a match score.

23. (original) The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of:

determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

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24. (original) The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

10   25. (original) The method of Claim 22, said step of matching further comprising the step of:

providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and

weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

15   26. (previously presented) The method of Claim 24, said step of matching further comprising the step of:

classifying each match score as one of:

deterministic to meeting said goal; and

non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

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27. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal is any of:

a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of

25   arbitrary inputs.

28. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

30   29. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal comprises:

a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

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a plurality of user profiles; and

an affinity group.

30. (previously presented) A computer implemented method for performing a
compensation survey of a user with a user tailored sequence of questions,
comprising the steps of:

presenting at least a segment of the sequence of questions to said user,
the user answers to said segment being pertinent in determining an affinity of
said user to compensation within an affinity group, wherein said affinity group
comprises a plurality of profiles ;

creating a user profile for said user or adding to the profile for said user
based on said user's answers to said segment , wherein said user profile is
comprised of said sequence of questions and corresponding answers;

performing at least one of associating said user profile to at least one
existing affinity group and creating at least one new affinity group and
associating said user profile with said new affinity group;

presenting a subsequent segment of said sequence of questions to said
user, the selection of said subsequent segment being influenced by at least one
of an answer received to a previously presented question in said sequence of
questions and an affinity group to which said user profile is correlated by said
method;

optionally repeating the steps above until all possible questions of said
sequence of questions have been presented to and answered by said user; and

storing said user profile.

31. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein a segment of a
sequence of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question
group forming a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

32. (cancelled)

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33. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein said at least subsequent segment of said sequence of questions is presented because of at least one of:

    popularity of said subsequent segment within said affinity group;

5   as a most frequently answered subsequent segment within said affinity group;

    as a most recently answered subsequent segment within said affinity group; and

    with regard to a defined relation to said at least a segment.

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34. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein at least one question is capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

35. (previously presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein said open text

15   allows said user to add a new answer value to said at least one question.

36. (previously presented) The method of Claim 35, wherein said new answer is used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said question is subsequently posed to a second user.

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37. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein a question comprises at least two possible answers.

38. (original) The method of Claim 37, wherein said user may select more than

25   one answer to said question.

39. (original) The method of Claim 37, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:

    popularity of an answer within said affinity group;

30   as a defined relation to said at least one question;

    as a most frequent answer within said affinity group; and

    as a most recent answer within said affinity group.

40. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

    filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application

5   of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

41. (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:

    real-time; and

10   batch mode.

42. (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:

    modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:

15   predetermined criterion;

    at least one filtering rule;

    consistency with previously answered questions;

    consistency with all answered questions; and

    consistency with answers of said affinity group.

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43. (previously presented) The method of claim 42, wherein said modification comprises at least one of omission of said answer and tagging said user profile as inactive.

25   44. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

    periodically creating a new affinity group; and

    associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

45. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:

30   a user creating a new affinity group.

46. (original) The method of Claim 45, further comprising the step of:

associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

47. (original) The method of Claim 30, wherein said affinity group comprises at least one of:

5   profession;

geographic location;

compensation;

compensation range;

experience;

10   experience range;

position; and

position range.

48. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:

15   providing a compensation report.

49. (original) The method of Claim 48, said compensation report is constrained by at least one of:

an attribute of said user profile; and

20   a reporting goal.

50. (original) The method of Claim 49, further comprising the step of:

weighting said constraint to provide a match score.

25   51. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising at least one of:

a desired compensation;

a desired range of compensation;

a desired geographic location;

a desired firm; and

30   a desired range of firms.

52. (original) The method of Claim 49, said step of providing said report, comprising the step of:

matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of:

5   an affinity group; and

a user profile.

53. (original) The method of Claim 52 further comprising the step of:

determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

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54. (original) The method of Claim 53, further comprising the step of:

arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

15   55. (original) The method of Claim 52, said step of matching further comprising the steps of:

providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and

weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

20   56. (original) The method of claim 55, said step of matching further comprising the step of:

classifying each match score as one of:

deterministic to meeting said goal; and

non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

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57. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising any of:

a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of

30   arbitrary inputs.

58. (original) The method of Claim 57, said personal goal comprising at least one of:

       compensation;

       compensation range;

5   salary;

       salary range;

       geographic location;

       position; and

       position range.

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59. (original) The method of Claim 57, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

60. (original) The method of Claim 59, wherein said statistical information

15 comprises at least one of:

       average compensation;

       average salary;

       median compensation;

       median salary;

20   salary percentile;

       standard deviation;

       trend;

       profile count;

       most frequent compensation; ands

25   most frequent salary.

61. (original) The method of Claim 57, said report resulting from said personal goal providing a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

       a plurality of user profiles; and

30   an affinity group.

62. (original) The method of Claim 30, said compensation comprising at least one of:

annual salary;

monthly salary;

5   weekly salary;

hourly rate;

bonus;

tip;

benefits; and

10   vacation time.

63. (previously presented) An apparatus for compensation surveying and reporting by presenting a tailored sequence of questions to a user, comprising:

means for accessing a Web site, said Web site being accessible via a

15   network;

means for surveying the user for information pertinent for determination of compensation, said means for surveying presenting a segment of a sequence of questions to said user and, upon determination of an affinity group of said user, presenting a subsequent segment of said sequence of questions

20   determined to be most suitable for said user;

means for creating a user profile for said user based on gathering of said information, said user profile further comprised of at least one question and at least one corresponding answer;

means for storing said user profile;

25   means for periodically generating an affinity group comprising a plurality of user profiles, the affinity group being determined as a result of a correlation between a plurality of profiles; and

means for matching an attribute of said user profile with at least one affinity group.

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64. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:

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means for selecting at least one affinity group to which said user profile best matches.

65. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said network
5   comprising at least one of:
         a local area network (LAN);
         a wide area network (WAN);
         an Intranet;
         the Internet; and
10   the World Wide Web.

66. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:
         means for reporting results based on a reporting goal.

15   67. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 66, said means for reporting
further comprising:
         means for matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a
corresponding matchfield of at least one of:
             an affinity group; and
20   a user profile.

68. (original) The apparatus of Claim 67, said means for matching further
comprising:
         means for classifying each match score as one of:
25   deterministic to meeting said goal; and
             non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

69. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, said reporting goal comprising at least
one of:
30   salary range;
             hourly rate range;
             billing rate;

vacation range;

commission range;

stock option packages;

tips;

5   benefits comparison; and

total compensation calculations.

70. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, said affinity group comprising at least one of:

10   industry;

job;

profession;

geographic location;

compensation range;

15   experience range;

skill, certification;

responsibility;

employer name;

employer type;

20   employer size;

employer sales;

employer business;

employer product;

employer service;

25   gender;

age range;

school name;

degree;

study major; and

30   ethnic background.

71. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, said compensation comprising at least one of:

  annual salary;

  monthly salary;

5 weekly salary;

  daily rate;

  hourly rate;

  overtime rate;

  bonus;

10 tip;

  benefits;

  vacation time;

  stock; and

  stock options.

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72. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal comprises one of:

  a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

20 an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

73. (original) The apparatus of Claim 72, said personal goal comprising at least one of:

25 compensation;

  compensation range;

  salary;

  salary range;

  geographic location;

30 job position; and

  statistical information.

74. (original) The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said user profile comprising:

    likes of said user.

5   75. (original) The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said affinity group comprising:

    a user profile comprising likes of said user.

76. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal provides

10 aggregated information pertaining to a plurality of user profiles.

77. (original) The apparatus of Claim 76, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

15 78. (original) The apparatus of Claim 77, said statistical information comprising at least one of:

    average compensation;

    average salary;

    median compensation;

20   median salary;

    salary percentile;

    standard deviation;

    trend;

    profile count;

25   most frequent compensation; and

    most frequent salary.

79. (cancelled)

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80. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein a question from said sequence of questions is associated with a plurality of possible answers.

81. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 80, wherein said possible answers are a subset of a plurality of answers, wherein said subset being selected at least in respect of at least one of said user profile, and an affinity

5   group associated with said user profile.

82. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein said user may select at least one answer to said question.

10   83. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, said possible answers further comprising:

   an open text.

84. (original) The apparatus of Claim 83, said open text allowing said user to add

15   a new answer to said possible answers.

85. (original) The apparatus of Claim 84, wherein said new answer is used as one of said possible answers when a question is subsequently suggested to a second user.

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86. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein a subsequent question is selected for presentation to said user from a plurality of possible questions.

25   87. (original) The apparatus of Claim 86, wherein said selection from a plurality of possible question is tailored to correspond with said user profile.

88. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein upon selection of an answer by said user, said user profile is associated with an affinity group.

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89. (currently amended) The apparatus of Claim ~~79~~63, wherein said means for surveying enable said user to add a new question.

90. (original) The apparatus of Claim 89, wherein said user may add a new answer to said question.

5   91. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said affinity groups are created based on at least a commonality between at least one attribute and at least one corresponding value.

92. (previously presented) A computer implemented method for surveying using
10   survey questions tailored to a user, comprising the steps of:

asking a question from the user, the question being pertinent to the determination of compensation of said user;

receiving an answer from said user;

storing said first question and said answer in a user profile respective of
15   said user;

adding said user profile to at least one matching affinity group, the affinity group being determined as a result of a correlation between a plurality of profiles;

optionally filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of
20   predefined criteria;

modifying an answer if it is inconsistent with at least one of:

said user profile; and

said affinity group;

determining an appropriate next question to be presented to said user,
25   said appropriate question being determined based on at least one of said matching affinity group and an answer to a previously presented question; and

repeating the foregoing steps until a full profile is established.

93. (previously presented) The method of claim 92, further comprising the steps
30   of:

at least periodically checking all user profiles; and

attempting to generate at least an affinity group, wherein said affinity group comprises at least a user profile.

94. (original) The method of Claim 92, further comprising the step of:

5 preparing a report based on at least one of:

an attribute of said user profile; and

a reporting goal.

95. (currently amended) The method of Claim 92, wherein said step of ~~optionally~~

10 filtering said user profile is performed in an off-line mode.

96. (original) The method of Claim 92, wherein said appropriate next question is determined based on at least one of:

popularity of said question within said affinity group;

15 a defined relation to said at least one question;

a most frequently answered question within said affinity group;

a most recently answered question within said affinity group; and

in relation to said question.

20 97. (original) The method of Claim 94, further comprising the step of:

querying any of a database of a plurality of user profiles and a database of a plurality of affinity groups for a statistical report.

98. (original) The method of Claim 97, wherein said statistical report comprises

25 at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;

median compensation;

median salary;

30 salary percentile;

standard deviation;

trend;

.35

profile count;

most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

5   99. (original) The method of Claim 98, further comprising the step of:

generating said statistical report with at least one of said attributes held

constant.

100. (original) The method of Claim 94, said generating step further comprising

10   the step of:

constraining by at least one of:

an attribute of said user profile; and

a goal.

15   101. (original) The method of Claim 100, wherein said goal comprises at least

one of:

a profile attribute value;

a range of profile attribute values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;

20   a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;

a date range, a minimum count of matching profiles;

a maximum count of matching profiles;

a question filter;

an affinity filter; and

25   a match score threshold.

102. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:

weighting said constraint results to provide a match score.

30   103. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:

determining a best match from a plurality of possible matches.

104. (original) The method of Claim 103, further comprising the step of:

arranging said match by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

5   105. (original) The method of Claim 100, said matching step further comprising the steps of:

providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and

weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

10   106. (original) The method of Claim 100, said step of matching to said affinity group further comprising the step of:

classifying each match score as one of:

deterministic to meeting said goal; and

non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

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107. (original) The method of Claim 100, said goal comprising one of:

a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of

20   arbitrary inputs.

108. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

25   109. (original) The method of Claim 108, wherein said statistical information comprises at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;

median compensation;

30   median salary;

salary percentile;

standard deviation;

trend;

profile count;

most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

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110. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal provides a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

a plurality of user profiles; and

10   an affinity group.